

m/053/005

From: Wayne Hedberg
To: LBRAXTON
Date: Tuesday, March 14, 1995 12:32 pm
Subject: USMX EMERGENCY SOLUTION RELEASE

I RECEIVED A TELEPHONE CALL FROM ROBERT WILSON OF USMX THIS MORNING REGARDING THE IMPACTS OF RECENT HEAVY PRECIPITATION EVENTS AT THE GOLDSTRIKE MINE SITE. BETWEEN FRIDAY NIGHT AND SUNDAY MORNING (MARCH 10-12) THE MINE RECEIVED @4 INCHES OF PRECIPITATION. THIS LATEST STORM FOLLOWS A SERIES OF MORE RECENT STORMS AND A CONTINUED WET STORM PATTERN WHICH APPARENTLY BEGAN IN NOVEMBER/94.

MR. WILSON INDICATED THAT THEY WERE FORCED TO INTENTIONALLY DISCHARGE LEACH PAD RUNOFF AND TREATED PROCESS WATERS FROM THEIR RECYCLE POND AND THE HAMBURG PIT POND TO ARSENIC GULCH. THEY STARTED DISCHARGING ON SATURDAY AFTERNOON AND HAVE CONTINUED NON-STOP THROUGH THIS MORNING. DISCHARGES TOTAL @7,000,000 GALLONS THUS FAR AND THEY WILL DISCHARGE ANOTHER 1,000,000 GALLONS BEFORE TERMINATING THE EMERGENCY DISCHARGE BY TOMORROW MORNING. THEY ARE TRYING TO REESTABLISH SUFFICIENT RESERVE STORAGE VOLUME FOR ANOTHER FORECASTED STORM SYSTEM(S) MOVING IN FROM THE WEST COAST.

THEY ARE TAKING DAILY SAMPLES (AS PER DWQ REQUIREMENTS) AND ARE SENDING THEM OUT TO CHEMTECH FOR LABORATORY ANALYSES. ONSITE ANALYSES OF CYANIDE FROM THE DISCHARGE PIPES DO NOT APPEAR TO EXCEED DRINKING WATER STANDARDS. MR. WILSON STATED IT WAS FORTUNATE THAT USMX HAD INTENTIONALLY LOWERED THE CYANIDE LEVELS IN THEIR PROCESS SOLUTIONS LAST FALL, AS AN EXPERIMENT TO SEE HOW LOW THEY COULD GO AND STILL GET REASONABLE GOLD RECOVERY. RECENT SAMPLES OF CN IN SOLUTIONS COMING OFF THE LEACH PADS AVERAGED ABOUT 2 PPM AND @0.2 PPM OR LESS IN THE PONDS. ANALYSES OF RESIDUAL METALS IN SOLUTION TAKEN A MONTH AGO INDICATED MERCURY WAS AT 0.008 PPM (DRINKING WATER STD. = 0.002 PPM), SELENIUM WAS AT 0.08 PPM (D.W. STD. = 0.04), AND ARSENIC WAS DOWN TO THE DRINKING WATER STANDARD. THEY HAVE BEEN ADDING SODIUM SULFATE AND IRON SULFATE TO THE PROCESS PONDS TO LOWER THE MERCURY AND SELENIUM LEVELS EVEN FURTHER. THEY HAVE CONTINUED WITH THIS PRACTICE AS PART OF THE EMERGENCY DISCHARGE ACTIONS. MR. WILSON DOUBTED THAT THEIR DISCHARGES WOULD BE EXCEEDING ANY ESTABLISHED THRESHOLD LEVELS EXCEPT PERHAPS TDS. EVENTUAL RESULTS OF ACTUAL SAMPLE ANALYSES WILL CONFIRM.

THE DIVISION OF WATER QUALITY HAS BEEN WORKING CLOSELY WITH USMX IN MONITORING THE PRESENT SITUATION AND WILL PROBABLY ISSUE A NOTICE OF VIOLATION AT SOME POINT. THE BLM IS APPARENTLY LETTING THE STATE (DWQ) TAKE THE LEAD AND HAS NO IMMEDIATE PLANS OR NEED TO TAKE ANY ENFORCEMENT ACTION. APPARENTLY WAYNE THOMAS (LOCAL DISTRICT ENGINEER FOR DEQ) WAS OUT ONSITE SUNDAY NITE AND TOOK WATER SAMPLES OF THE DISCHARGES AS WELL.

I ADVISED USMX TO KEEP US ADVISED OF THEIR PROGRESS AND ANY CHANGES THAT MAY ARISE. MR. WILSON AGREED TO DO SO. I DO NOT FEEL THAT ANY ADDITIONAL ACTION IS WARRANTED ON THE PART OF THIS DIVISION AT THE PRESENT TIME. IF YOU DO NOT AGREE WITH MY ASSESSMENT, PLEASE ADVISE.

A COPY OF THIS EMAIL WILL BE SENT TO THE MINE FILE. - M/053/005

CC: MINERALS